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## *THERE*-CONSTRUCTIONS AND DEFINITENESS: A MENTAL SPACE THEORY PERSPECTIVE\*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is intended to examine the interpretation of definite noun phrases within English *there*-constructions and their grammaticality on the basis of Fauconnier's (1994) mental space theory. The peculiarities of *there*-constructions have long intrigued most linguists, and a great number of attempts to grasp them have been made over the past few decades. Especially from a syntactic viewpoint, how the expletive *there* is filled in the position of the external argument has often been considered. In addition, we have been facing an obstacle to solution for what type of noun phrase is permitted to occur in *there*-constructions. As (1a) demonstrates, indefinite noun phrases can appear quite freely in *there*-constructions. Conversely, we may find the sentence in (1b) below somewhat unacceptable or perfectly ungrammatical on account of the definite noun phrase within the *there*-construction sentence:

- (1) a. There is a man in the room. (Milsark 1974: 166)  
b. \*There is the man in the room. (ibid.: 208)

It is generally agreed that restrictions are imposed on occurrence of noun phrases within *there*-constructions, one of which has been called the "definiteness restriction" or "definiteness effect" (Milsark 1974; Belletti 1988; Lumsden 1988). This restriction also covers those *there*-construction sentences with quantifiers that specify the referent of a noun phrase (e.g., *all*, *both*, *each*, *every*, *most*, and so on), whereas numerals like *one* or *two* and quantifiers representing unspecific quantity such as *a few*, *a little*, *many*, or *much* are allowed to occur as an adjective preceding the noun phrase, as shown in (2):

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\* This is a revised version of my M.A. thesis submitted to Osaka University in January 2004. Part of this paper is based on a presentation at the 6th national conference of the Pragmatics Society of Japan held at Kanagawa University on December 6, 2003. I would like to express my appreciation to Seisaku Kawakami and Yukio Oba for their invaluable comments and encouragement. I am profoundly indebted to Hideki Mori and Yusuke Minami for their continuing support and insightful suggestions. Many thanks also extend to Paul A. S. Harvey for stylistic improvements. Remaining errors and inadequacies are, of course, my own.

- (2) a. There are two books on the table. (Milsark 1974: 165)
- b. There were several people in the room. (ibid.: 27)
- c. \*There are all dogs in the room. (ibid.: 195)
- d. ?There are most hotels on the island. (Lumsden 1998: 111)

Milsark (1974) proposes that existential quantifiers (*two* in (2a) and *some* in (2b)) should be associated with indefinite noun phrases while universal quantifiers (*all* in (2c) and *most* in (2d)) with definite noun phrases, whereby it is proved that definiteness effect is brought to *there*-constructions.

We must also take notice of some cases, illustrated in (3), in which noun phrases that are not considered indefinites can arise as an argument within *there*-constructions:

- (3) a. There's the book on the table. (Abbott 1993: 44)
- b. Nobody around here is worth talking to... well, there is John the salesman. (Belletti 1988: 15)

Many articles have been devoted to this contradictory grammaticality in terms of occurrence of definite noun phrases. The present paper aims at a more straightforward explanation to clear up the lack of agreement.

We shall also discuss the limitation on verbs within *there*-constructions in English. As (4) exemplifies, English *there*-constructions are supposed to allow unaccusative verbs (including the verb *be*) to appear:

- (4) a. There arose a storm here. (ibid.: 4)
- b. There emerged several new facts at the meeting. (Lumsden 1988: 38)

Haegeman (1991) indicates that such ergative verbs as *sink* (*sunk* in (5)), which permit transitive-intransitive alternation, are not to occur:

- (5) \*There sunk three ships last week. (Haegeman 1991: 310)

In reality, however, the quotation in (6) lays bare the fact that some ergative verbs seem to emerge in *there*-constructions:

- (6) About three o'clock there began the thud of a gun at measured intervals from Chertsey or Addlestone. (HTI)

Since ergative verbs can alternate transitive use with intransitive use, we are able to categorize as ergative *begin*, *start*, *open*, and the like, which are not supposed to occur in *there*-constructions in accordance with Haegeman. In the present paper, we shall consider these incompatible phenomena.

The paper is organized as follows: in the following section, we review some previous analyses. Section 3 briefly outlines Fauconnier's (1994) mental space theory employed in the present study. In section 4, we review remaining problems as regards the definiteness effect imposed on English *there*-constructions and verb types that can

turn up in *there*-constructions, and seek to provide alternative solutions to them on the strength of mental space theory. *There*-constructions in English are commonly said to require locative phrases<sup>1</sup> for syntactic reasons (Hornstein et al. 1996), regardless of which some cases appear to fail. This issue is dealt with in section 5, which is devoted to discussion of the grammaticality of *there*-constructions without locative phrases. The final section concludes the paper.

## 2 PREVIOUS ANALYSES

This section illustrates the overview of previous analyses on English *there*-constructions from a variety of viewpoints, showing some examples that verify each claim and discussing the problems left unclear or unsolved. While linguistic data prove that most *there*-constructions follow such fixed forms as *there is/are*, it has been usually asserted that they should be acceptable with verbs other than *be*. In the subsections below, first we briefly survey previous studies on *there*-constructions accompanied by the verb *be*, and in the second subsection, we make reference to discussion on *there*-constructions with verbs apart from the verb *be*.

### 2.1 *There-Constructions with the Verb Be*

This subsection focuses on observations that have been made on *there*-constructions with the verb *be*.

*2.1.1 Quirk et al. (1985) and Fukuchi (1997)* Both Quirk et al. (1985) and Fukuchi (1997), in favor of functionalism, attempt to explain the expletive *there* in terms of information structure. Especially in Quirk et al. (1985), sentences are supposed to start out with given information, conforming to the most natural information flow. Information flow is such that information should begin with given information, which is followed by new information. Fukuchi (1997) mainly insists that definite noun phrases be subject to given information while indefinite counterparts be subject to new information. This idea is of course prevalent and seems to hold good through numerous sentences in English as shown below:

- (7) a. Yesterday I met Jane in a hall. The hall was decorated with many paintings. (Fukuchi 1997: 17)
- b. ?A box is empty. (ibid.: 30)
- c. There is a girl in the room. (ibid.: 106)

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<sup>1</sup> Locative phrases in the present paper merely refer to prepositional phrases denoting some location, such as *in*+\_\_\_\_, *from*+\_\_\_\_, and so on.

(7a) is the most typical instance that firmly reflects Fukuchi. The indefinite noun phrase *a hall* is followed by the definite one *the hall*, which we find is expected from ordinary information flow. On the other hand, (7b) is not acceptable because of the indefinite noun phrase at the beginning of the sentence, which hinders us from inferring the referent of *a box* (with enough context to deduce the referent, (7b) is occasionally not unacceptable). If the expletive *there* in (7c) is what is called the marker indicating that the following referent should be new information, then the noun phrase in the *there*-construction sentence should be semantically indefinite; therefore, the form *a/an NP* or *NPs* is syntactically allowed to appear in the *there*-constructions, in the light of Fukuchi. However, this leads us to notice that there are a plenty of counterexamples, as shown in the previous section:

- (8) a. There's the book on the table. (=3a)  
       b. Nobody around here is worth talking to... well, there is John the salesman. (=3b)

The functional standpoint stated above ought to consider the *there*-constructions in (8) to be ungrammatical because each sentence has a definite noun phrase or proper noun within it. This shows that functional analyses are not sufficient to predict the grammaticality of *there*-constructions.

2.1.2 Milsark (1974) Milsark (1974) demonstrates how a proper noun appears in the *there*-construction sentence as in (9a), noting that noun phrases in *there*-constructions should contain a specific meaning whether they are indefinite, definite, or proper nouns. (9b) is Milsark's account for existential sentences like (9a):

- (9) a. Nobody around here is worth talking to... well, there is John the salesman. (=3b)  
       b. The most striking thing about the meaning of a sentence like [9a] is the feeling they have of naming parts of a list. The NP *John* seems to be introduced as an item of a larger list of entities, even if one does not go on naming the rest of them. (Milsark 1974: 209)

It follows that, in (9a), *John* is an item that exists within the list containing "certain people worth talking to" and that *John* has to be semantically indefinite at least in the list concerned because *John* is optionally picked out from the list (This type of *there*-construction is called a "list (existential) sentence"). According to this, English existential sentences seem to presuppose a sort of list within which some referents are included. This claim is, however, contradicted by various data, which are made given in (10). Although a noun phrase in *there*-constructions might be the referent represented by naming parts of a list, some cases are grammatically correct without any lists that are believed to be the key to the grammaticality of *there*-constructions:

- (10) There's the book on the table. (=3a)

The crucial thing is what kind of list we assume as the appropriate list that *the book* in

(10) should belong to.

*2.1.3 Belletti (1988)* Belletti's (1988) syntactic analysis may validate each example of the list sentences cited in the previous section. This analysis is originally for the accuracy of the unaccusative hypothesis, which claims that verbs classified as unaccusatives<sup>2</sup> do not assign Case to their selected D-structure object. Belletti assumes that unaccusative verbs in English can assign a partitive Case regardless of definiteness of noun phrases, which is attributed to the relation between the unaccusative verb and the following noun phrase in Finnish. To reflect this in English *there*-constructions, a noun phrase in *there*-constructions must be assigned a partitive Case, and thus the noun phrase turns out to be a part of a particular list.

The property of list sentences may be clarified by means of the application of syntactic analyses to semantic fields. Nonetheless, as is demonstrated in (10), this fails to analyze all of the acceptable examples used in a different variety of contexts.

*2.1.4 Abbott (1993)* Abbott (1993) is one of the claims that attempt to cast light on the problems of list sentences. In her remarks, only the syntactic or semantic viewpoint does not suffice for the grammaticality of *there*-constructions, but it must depend a lot on the context in which every single sentence is uttered and pragmatic analyses can reflect linguistic data even more precisely. It is unfortunate that Abbott has only stated the future prospects of pragmatics and does not allude to the criteria that serve to figure out the grammaticality.

Abbott has thought of *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases as perfectly grammatical only with contextual appropriateness, which is made obvious by her classification of *there*-constructions into two main groups, "CE" (contextualized existentials) and "NE" (noncontextualized existentials). The following example, adapted from Abbott, clearly shows how the context in which each utterance is made reflects the grammaticality of *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases:

- (11) A: Is there anything to eat?  
       B: Well, there's the leftover chicken from last night. (Abbott 1993: 42)

The *there*-construction in (11B) is said to be acceptable only if it is the reply to such an interrogative as (11A), that is to say, it is a CE due to the utterance in a certain appropriate setting. Notably, what is called a CE here is commonly called a "list sentence" in the literature, following Milsark (1974). Still, as Abbott has asked, can such a sentence as (11B) be a genuine list sentence? We cannot deny that some *there*-constructions fail to presuppose the so-called lists involved.

*2.1.5 Lakoff (1987)* Lakoff (1987), which has sought to project his cognitive view of language into use of *there*-constructions, looks through a number of instances along with their contexts. According to him, *there*-constructions can be divided into "deictic *there*-construction" and "existential *there*-construction," as in the examples

<sup>2</sup> Section 4 considers 'unaccusative verbs' in detail.

below (capitals indicate stress):

- (12) a. THERE's a new Mercedes across the street. (deictic)  
 b. There's a new MERCEDES across the street. (existential)  
 (Lakoff 1987: 540)

Moreover, the existence deictic is based on the following metaphor: EXISTENTIAL IS UNDERSTOOD AS LOCATION IN A CONCEPTUAL SPACE. In this sense, we can say that the central existential is based on the central deictic construction: that it takes its properties from the central deictic construction. Despite much profound consideration, however, the problem of definite or indefinite noun phrases is not properly discussed, and it calls for a better account.

## 2.2 Restriction on Occurrence of Verbs in *there*-Constructions

Milsark (1974) and Belletti (1988) have suggested a category of verbs allowed to occur in *there*-constructions. Verbs that represent "appearance" or "existence" fall into this category, such verbs as *be*, *arise*, *emerge*, *exist*, *occur*, and so on:

- (13) a. There arose a storm here. (=4a)  
 b. There emerged several new facts at the meeting. (=4b)  
 c. There remain a few crates of beer in the cellar. (Lumsden 1988:38)  
 d. There follows a party political broadcast.<sup>3</sup> (ibid.)

There are "unaccusative verbs" in (13). Interestingly, what are likely to be labeled as unaccusative verbs cannot be entirely compatible with *there*-constructions:

- (14) \*There sunk three ships last night. (=5)

Haegeman (1991) suggests that the verb *sunk* in (14) comes under another category and that unaccusative verbs are classified into two distinct groups: (i) verbs representing "motion" or "existence" (what are more strictly called unaccusative verbs<sup>4</sup>) like *arrive*, *happen*, and so on; (ii) verbs that can alternate transitive usage with intransitive usage, such as *sink*, *break*, *close*, *increase*, *open*, or the like (i.e. ergative verbs). As illustrated in (14), the former can be made possible with *there*-constructions while the latter cannot.

Discussed so far in a number of studies on verbal classification, it might be extremely laborious to state which verb should belong to which category, specifically, ergative or unaccusative. Nonetheless, it seems that verbs fully available for alternation between transitive and intransitive are thought of as ergative verbs as

<sup>3</sup> *There*-constructions without locative phrases are discussed in section 5.

<sup>4</sup> Unaccusative verbs here refer to intransitive verbs that do not show transitive-intransitive alternation, thus they include passive and raising verbs.

listed above. This being the case, verbs of this type should fail to occur in *there*-constructions. Notwithstanding, contrary to all expectations, there are some cases in which ergative verbs are found within *there*-constructions:

- (15) a. Whilst Ministers were assembling, Harold called Ted Short, the Deputy Leader, Denis Healey and me to his study and there broke the news to the three of us. (BNC)  
 b. About three o'clock there began the thud of a gun at measured intervals from Chertsey or Addlestone. (=6)

The verb *break* (*broke* in (15a)) must be an ergative verb because transitive use (e.g., *to break the glass*) is possible. Also, *begin* (*began* in (15b)) or *start* is said to be a typical ergative verb, but linguistic data have supplied quite a few occurrences with *begin* or *start* in *there*-constructions.

It might take some special remarks to estimate that the classification hinging upon verbal categories is for the most part advantageous. We shall bring this up later for an alternative proposal.

### 3 OUTLINE OF MENTAL SPACE THEORY

As proposed at the beginning, the present paper deals with the specific interpretation of *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases and their grammaticality from the viewpoint of Fauconnier's (1994) mental space theory. In this section, let us look into the outline of mental space theory, in particular its association with *there*-constructions.

#### 3.1 Connectors and ID Principle

First, let us consider the study of reference before entering into details about mental space theory. It is generally claimed that we establish links between objects of a different nature for psychological, cultural, or locally pragmatic reasons, and the links thus established allow reference to one object in terms of another object appropriately linked to it. The general principle is as follows:

- (16) *Identification Principle*  
 If two objects (in the most general sense), *a* and *b*, are linked by a pragmatic function *F* ( $b = F(a)$ ), a description of *a*,  $d_a$ , may be used to identify its counterpart *b*. (Fauconnier 1994: 3)

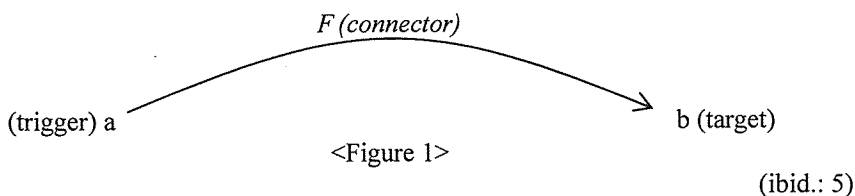
Here is one simple instance. If one function  $F_I$  links authors with the books containing their works, given  $a = \text{"Plato,"}$   $b = F_I(a) = \text{"books by Plato,"}$  then ID



Principle allows (a) to mean (b):

- (17) a. Plato is on the top shelf.  
 b. The books by Plato are on the top shelf. (Fauconnier 1994: 4)

Consider the general situation in which  $b$  is linked to  $a$  by a pragmatic function  $F$  and may be referred to by means of a description of  $a$ , according to the ID Principle. Call  $a$  the reference “trigger,”  $b$  the reference “target,” and  $F$  the “connector,” as illustrated in Figure 1.



$F$  may simply be the identity function, as in Figure 2. In that case,  $b$  will be described in terms of its own properties.



### 3.2 Space-Builders

Mental spaces are constructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions. In the model, mental spaces will be represented as structured, incrementable sets, such that new elements can be added to them and new relations established between their elements. Linguistic expressions will typically establish new spaces, elements within them, and relations holding between the elements. “Space-builders” may establish a new space or refer back to one already introduced in the discourse. They may be prepositional phrases (*in Len’s picture, in 1929, at the faculty*), adverbs (*really, probably*), connectives (*if A then \_\_\_\_\_, either \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_*), and underlying subject-verb combinations (*Max believes \_\_\_\_\_, Mary hopes \_\_\_\_\_*).

### 3.3 Noun Phrases

**3.3.1 Noun Phrases as Elements** It is, then, essential that we should consider how noun phrases can be interpreted on the basis of mental space theory. What follows leads us to propose that indefinite and definite interpretation has something in common in terms of their “elements”:

(18) Indefinite Interpretation

The noun phrase *a N* in a language expression sets up a new element *w* in some space, such that “N”(w) holds in that space.

(Fauconnier 1994: 20)

(19) Definite Interpretation

- a. The noun phrase *the N* in a linguistic expression points to an element *a* already in some space *M*, such that “N”(a) holds in that space.
- b. If *N* is a proper name, the noun phrase *N* points to an element *a* already in some space *M*, such that *N* is a name for *a* in *M*.

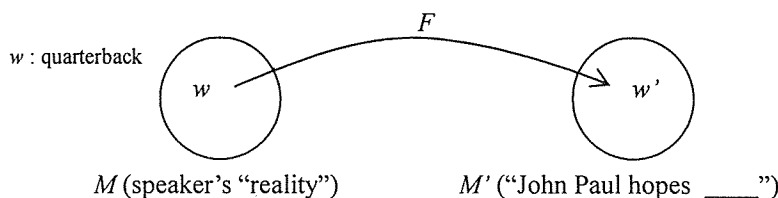
(ibid.: 20)

By means of Indefinite Interpretation in (19), an indefinite noun phrase *a N* will introduce a new element *w* into a certain space. This can account for the so-called specific-nonspecific contrast in (20):

- (20) John Paul hopes that *a former quarterback* will adopt needy children.

(ibid.: 23)

There are two spaces *M* and *M'*, and the connector *F* maps “reality” onto “hopes.” If the noun phrase *a former quarterback* sets up *w* directly in *M'*, then *w* has no counterpart in *M*; that is, no “real” quarterback is set up (the so-called nonspecific reading). If the noun phrase sets up a trigger *w* in *M* and a target *w'* in *M'*, then a “real” quarterback, *w*, is set up, with a counterpart in *M'* (the specific reading). In the first case, the property “quarterback” holds (for *w*) in *M'*; in the second, it holds in *M*. In the latter configuration (i.e. the specific reading), as Figure 4 illustrates, “quarterback” is not necessarily a property of *w'*: John Paul may know the speaker’s former quarterback only in his capacity as a missionary.



(ibid.: 24)



- b.  $P(r(m))$  property of a value of that role

(Fauconnier 1994: 41)

$r(m)$  is the value of role  $r$  for the contextual parameter  $m$ . The fact that a linguistic description may identify a role or its value can be considered a case of transferred trigger reference, since the link between a role and its value for some setting of parameter  $m$  is itself a pragmatic function  $F$ :

$$(25) \quad F(m, r) = r(m) \quad (\text{ibid.: 42})$$

### 3.4 Application of Mental Space Theory to There-Constructions

As stated in the sections above, we are now in a better position to declare that mental space theory is remarkably successful in detailed descriptions of meaning carried by noun phrases. This is the very point that I have found exceedingly advantageous for the present exploration into *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases. Before entering into the next section, I would like to note a few respects on mental space theory that should be emphasized in the process of the investigation.

First, let a space  $M$  be the domain with the cognition of both a speaker and a hearer, and assume a space  $M'$  to be a new space introduced by a space-builder. Most of all, the definition of a space  $M$  seems to be deviant to some extent because the property of a space  $M$  lies only upon a speaker's reality, following Fauconnier (1994). However, it is not an unusual way to interpret definiteness, for definiteness often dictates the shared knowledge of both a speaker and a hearer. This paper deals with a space  $M$  as a speaker's "belief" in which the speaker believes an element in a space  $M$  to be in the shared cognition of both the speaker and the hearer. To put it another way, provided that a space for a speaker's reality is represented as a space  $R$ , a space  $M$  must be included within a space  $R$ :  $M \subset R$ . Although one may find a space  $R$  completely disregarded in the following section, its representation is omitted in view of the more refined figure.

Second, in the present examination of *there*-constructions, a space newly introduced by a space-builder is assumed to be that which provides specific meaning to definite noun phrases in *there*-constructions. It has been so far claimed that, for example, when a prepositional locative phrase is a space-builder, a new space "location" is introduced. In other words, the referent signified by a space-builder builds a space directly linked with the referent. Compared with this, the approach taken here might feel somewhat special because some phrase (a space builder) in itself does not construct a space associated with the referent denoted by the phrase. In the discussion below, we propose that this specialty be crossed out because in both approaches a new space provides a specific meaning for noun phrases.

## 4 OBSERVATION

## 4.1 Locative Phrases

The preceding section having outlined the theoretical background involved with the present study, we shed light on the notion that such prepositional phrases as locative phrases are generally regarded as space-builders. Bearing this in mind, consider the sentence below:

- (26) A dog may well think that his master is *at the door*: but unless a dog masters a language it is hard to see how he can think that he is thinking that his master is at the door. (BNC<sup>5</sup>)

In (26), the locative phrase *at the door* within the embedded sentence should be a space-builder<sup>6</sup>, and his master underlined is at least interpreted as “a master who exists beside the door.” The occurrence of the definite noun phrase *his master* can be attributed to the fact that both the speaker and the hearer are capable of identifying the referent by means of inference from *a dog*.

## 4.2 Proposal

The terse example in (26) has shown that the locative phrase is thought to build a new space, within which the referent of the definite expression can be figured out. Let us then turn our eyes to *there*-constructions. I would like to put special emphasis on the account that, in the case of *there*-constructions, the expletive *there* in combination with the locative phrase should be a space-builder, which can provide a different interpretation of definite noun phrases from such an ordinary interpretation as in (26).

Following this, let us discuss below how definite noun phrases within *there*-constructions can be perceived and consider the examples that follow:

- (27) a. “It was only yesterday that the chance came. I may tell you that, besides Mr. Rucastle, both Toller and his wife find something to do in these deserted rooms, and I once saw him carrying a large black linen bag with him through the door. Recently he has been drinking hard, and yesterday evening he was very drunk; and when I came upstairs **there was the key in the door**. I have no doubt at all that he had left it there... (HTI)
- b. ...Of course it was argued on the other side that the blood-marks on her dress might have been caused by her kneeling down by her

<sup>5</sup> Parts of the examples cited from corpora are underlined, italicized or bold-faced by the author.

<sup>6</sup> The modal auxiliary *may* in (26), of course, qualifies as a space-builder.

husband when she rushed out of her room; but **there was the open door below, and the fact that the fingermarks in the staircase all pointed upward.**<sup>7</sup> (HTI)

c. "We are then on an island!"

"Ay! **There are the falls on two sides of us, and the river above and below.**"<sup>8</sup> If you had daylight, it would be worth the trouble to step up on the height of this rock, and look at the perversity of the water."

(HTI)

Each definite noun phrase in the *there*-constructions in (27) can only be a referent identified by both a speaker and a hearer but appears to share additional connotation. (27a) seems to be contextualized as follows. Rucastle, Toller, and his wife have committed themselves in some way to the accident that has taken place, then the key has a few crucial hints for their participation. (27b) is similar to (27a) in terms of situation. The open door is apt to be the key to the settlement of what was going on at the scene of an attempted murder. Plus, it is probable that (27c) has a similar connotation to (27a) and (27b). No doubt the fundamental implication can hardly vary, and notice that the *there*-construction in (27c) is uttered in such a particular situation that the speaker (some sort of dictator) orders the hearer(s) to do something. The situation is that the explorers have drifted onto an unknown island and that one of them is shouting to the others to be aware of the strange geographical features.

So long as all the *there*-constructions in (27) are concerned, it is the function of "uniqueness" that should occupy the referents of definite noun phrases. It must be noted that the "uniqueness" discussed here does not refer to "unique identifiability" or "familiarity," in which the speaker believes that the hearer can uniquely identify the referent of a noun phrase. It does refer to additional implications that cannot be deduced only in a space *M*, in which both the speaker and the hearer share their cognition (The *there*-construction in (27c) may be conspicuous for the function of emphasis or gaining the special attention of the hearer). Truly, the *there*-constructions in (3) are list sentences, as Milsark (1974) and Belletti (1988) have supposed, but we claim that a similar peculiarity will result from the situation.

On behalf of uniqueness brought to definite expressions, consider the following sentences:

- (28) a. ... then **there will be the same intolerance towards outsiders as in the age of the Wars of Religion;** and if differences between scientific opinions could ever attain a similar significance for groups, the same result would again be repeated with this new motivation. (BNC)
- b. **There will be the usual floodlit scenes at Loughborough** with locos

<sup>7</sup> The *there*-construction sentence in (27b) might look like a list sentence, but it is not. That is because the referents *the open door (below)* and *the fact that the fingermarks in the staircase all pointed upward* are difficult to consider as the contents of a unified list. Furthermore, this sentence seems to have no locative phrases within it, which is discussed in section 5.

<sup>8</sup> The *there*-construction in (27c) could be paraphrased as follows: *There are the falls on two sides of us, and there is the river above and below.* Since the definite noun phrases are attached to the different prepositional phrases respectively, it is not natural that the *there*-construction in (27c) should be a list sentence.

posed in the yard and on the front of the passenger train which will, subject to availability, be hauled by GCR No 506 'Butler-Henderson' now in its final six months of service before the need for major overhaul. (BNC)

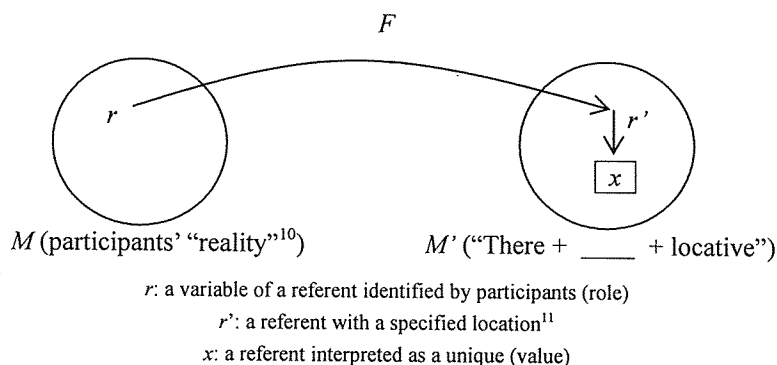
The *there*-constructions in (28) indicate what implication the noun phrases with the adjective phrases *the same* and *the usual* should exactly carry. After all, the point is whether each of the noun phrases in (28) prefers a token reading to a type counterpart. (28a) seems to be prove that a token reading should be accurate, because we assume that there does not exist a referent totally identical to something that existed in the age of the Wars of Religion. *The same intolerance towards outsiders as in the age of the Wars of Religion* should be, at token level, dissimilated from the intolerance toward outsiders that was once noticeable in the age of the Wars of Religion. The same holds good for *the usual* in (28b). *The usual floodlit scene* does not stand for exactly the same floodlit scenes being found most of the time, because the scene at a certain location continues (partially or entirely) to change in a very strict sense. In this regard, we must be aware of the fact that a token reading, rather than a type reading, is associated with uniqueness: the referents categorized into the same type should be strictly different, and there are no two referents totally identical to each other. In consequence, it follows that each distinct referent should be something unique with equal attributes, which testifies that definite noun phrases in *there*-constructions can have a specific reading, that is, uniqueness.

#### 4.3 The Space Providing a Noun Phrase with Uniqueness

We assume the grammaticality of English *there*-constructions with the device of mental space theory. Suppose first that a space  $M^9$  is the domain shared by both speakers and hearers and second, that only the role  $r$  of a definite noun phrase is taken within that space. Then, to be given a value, the definite noun phrase is interpreted in another space: a space  $M'$ , which is introduced by the expletive *there* and a locative phrase and is considered a space that provides the meaning of uniqueness. In a technical manner, a newly introduced space  $M'$  functions as the domain providing the meaning of uniqueness, and the role of a definite noun phrase takes that space for a role value, that is, uniqueness; consequently,  $r'(M')$  is to end up as an interpretation with uniqueness, as shown in Figure 5, modeled in a mental space theory style.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that a space  $M$  must be included within a space  $R$  (a speaker's reality):  $M \subset R$ . See 3.4 for details.



&lt;Figure 4&gt;

#### 4.4 There-constructions with Indefinite Noun Phrases

Let us now examine *there*-constructions with indefinite noun phrases. It is generally claimed that the reference of an indefinite description is not an object identifiable to the hearer. This surely precludes constructing a space  $M$  because of the lack of participants' shared comprehension. Where there is no equivalent for a space  $M$ , a space  $M'$  fails to be built by "There + \_\_\_\_ + locative." Uniqueness, in turn, does not fall into the right track, accompanied by indefinite noun phrases, as the *there*-constructions below clearly show:

- (29) a. It is therefore only in the wide thoroughfares that very high speed can be attained. In addition to the crank that corresponds to a throttle, **there is a gauge on every vehicle**, which shows its exact speed in miles per hour, by gearing operated by the revolutions of the wheels. (HTI)
- b. 'Twas thus she spoke when the last kiss was given on this occasion --- unless **there may have been one or two later in the evening**, to which it is not necessary more especially to allude here. (HTI)
- c. But the practice of taking an in-depth, thorough look at the candidates I think is a good one. **There have been many references in this hearing to the fact that in years past Supreme Court nominees simply weren't subjected to this kind of treatment or this kind of examination.** (HTI)
- d. Well, then, **there might be something in the story**, too, after all, and... (HTI)
- e. **There had been a good relationship on the whole between the**

<sup>10</sup> Speakers and hearers are called 'participants' from here on.

<sup>11</sup> This implies that  $r'$  is not a role but a value at a specified location. This  $r'$  cannot be a full role, but this paper signifies a referent with a specified location  $r'$  for convenience.



**management and myself** and it has been supportive on both sides.

(BNC)

- f. **There were frogs all round us**, bubbling away, and we sat still for a bit and then he said, 'That's the sound of Africa ---; it's one of the things I love best,' and I knew he hadn't been thinking about the baby or about me.

(BNC)

Given the indefinite description in (29a), the referent is not unique because it simply describes part of the car mechanism. *One or two* in (29b) is the number representing the frequency of the kisses mentioned in the preceding line. Even with the plural noun phrase, the indefinite description in (29c) is not unique, for this is the situation where one is merely in the middle of affirming unvarnished facts. (29d) has, needless to say, the indefinite pronoun *something*, which evidently does not refer to uniqueness. As for (29e), the problem is how the referent of *a good relationship* does involve the entire ongoing discourse. In the process of this discourse, it appears that the relationship has been simply supportive and is not a clue to the entire discourse involved. Lastly, *frogs* in (29f) is an apparently generic referent, which is not supposed to be unique.

#### 4.5 Prediction

Based on what has been discussed so far, we refer back to the *there*-constructions in (3) above:

- (30) a. There's the book on the table. (=3a)  
 b. Nobody around here is worth talking to... well, there is John the salesman. (=3b)

Abbott (1993) has pointed out that the *there*-constructions in (30a) must be an answer to an interrogative like "What can I use to prop open the door?" The utterance of an interrogative of that kind by the speaker would oblige the hearer to understand that she is now seeking *something to use for the purpose of propping open the door*, and then the hearer is to satisfy that assumption. In this case, the referent of the definite noun phrase does not simply describe an object, but it yields uniqueness: "something to use for the purpose of propping open the door." Hence, this does cause a space *M'* to be newly introduced. Considered to be a list sentence, this is also true of (30b). If, in (30b), John is a person the speaker can clearly identify, the value can perhaps be identified in the space *M*. We note that, however, there must be an assumption on the utterance of the *there*-construction sentence: "there appears to be *nobody around here worth talking to*, while he is actually trying to find an eligible person to talk to." The definite noun phrase *John* is, then, the referent that has met the requirement: "a person worth talking to," which triggers a newly introduced space *M'*. Thus, both (30a) and (30b) are grammatically acceptable.

#### 4.6 Summary

We have so far discussed the interpretation of definite noun phrases in *there*-constructions and their grammaticality on the basis of mental space theory. In the case of *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases, “There + \_\_\_\_\_ + locative” is to serve as a space-builder to introduce a new space *M'*, wherein uniqueness of the referent is construed. In contrast, uniqueness cannot be accepted with indefinite noun phrases. It seems reasonable to ascribe this to one of the traits of indefinite noun phrases because the referents denoted by them do not entail the shared knowledge of participants. This results in the preclusion of building a space *M*, which is the input to a newly introduced space *M'* relevant to uniqueness.

#### 4.7 Case of Verbs except *be*

We have made sure of the restrictions on verbal occurrence in *there*-constructions. As Haegeman (1991) notes, the verbs that coexist with *there*-constructions are, in a strict sense, unaccusative verbs.<sup>12</sup> The latter of section 2 referred to troublesome burden and difficulty on the classification of unaccusative verbs and indicated that this analysis of grammaticality ought to conflict with examples in which ergative verbs arise in *there*-constructions:

- (31) a. Whilst Ministers were assembling, Harold called Ted Short, the Deputy Leader, Denis Healey and me to his study and **there broke the news to the three of us.** (=15a)
- b. Miss Lister administered it herself, and during her life **there continued the practice she had begun in 1817 of keeping a daily journal.**<sup>13</sup> (BNC)
- c. Still he was cheered, and still he went on; and as he became more and more conscious of his failure **there grew upon him the idea --- the dangerous hope, that he might still save himself from ignominy by the eloquence of his invective against the police.** (HTI)

The respective verbs in (31) are obviously ergative. However, the point worth noting here is that all ergative verbs do not occur in *there*-constructions. Crucially, although *sink* (*sunk* in (32)) is an ergative type, per Haegeman, (32) is not acceptable, in opposition to the outcomes gained in (31). Therefore, we must embark upon a straightforward matter with regard to whether it is because of ergativity or unaccusativity that *there*-constructions are properly licensed.

- (32) \*There sunk three ships last week. (=5)

<sup>12</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> This *there*-construction sentence has no locative phrases within it (see section 5).

Here is one possibility. It follows from the upshots in (31) that ergative verbs can appear only with the implication of “appearance” or “existence,” so that the ungrammaticality of (32) is not due to ergativity or unaccusativity but to the property of sinking: the action of sinking does not involve either “appearance” or “existence”; it may rather be “disappearance.”

Let us here look at the property of ergative verbs denoting “appearance” or “existence.” We can attribute this to the way that the examples also clarify the fact that *there*-constructions with ergative verbs should take a definite noun phrase as an argument, which reminds us of the present analysis of *there*-constructions. It follows from what we have argued that a space  $M'$  introduced by the form “There + +locative” will account for some attached implication (uniqueness) in the case of ergative verbs. In all the instances illustrated in (31), each definite noun phrase offers some vital hints in terms of the flow of discourse, which contributes to the proof that there must be a space  $M'$  for uniqueness interpretation in this case as well. Each context in (31) omitted, this interpretation is accomplished only if the referent is an element of relative importance in the context while it is not when the referent does not have special significance.

In the discussion held above, it is fair to state that uniqueness is directly relevant to “appearance” or “existence.” Note here that the uniqueness of some object must be established under the condition that something unexpectedly “appears” or “exists” at a specific location, which is why ergative verbs of some other type, specifically, “disappearance” verbs, never appear in *there*-constructions, as in (32).

Nevertheless, we might be facing a radical problem: do ergative verbs occur only with definite noun phrases that are uniquely interpreted? Unfortunately, they do not at least in the following instances below. However, we cannot put aside a syntactic discrepancy between “There + V + \_\_\_\_ + location” and “There + V + location + \_\_\_\_.” We have argued that in effect, the former structure, which is the most general, allows definite noun phrases to be interpreted uniquely. The latter, on the other hand, indisputably comes with indefinite noun phrases as (33) illustrates.<sup>14</sup>

- (33) a. At this moment **there opened before us a large grotto dug in a picturesque heap of rocks** and carpeted with all the thick warp of the submarine flora. (HTI)
- b. Instantly **there broke from the gray parcel a little moaning cry**, and from it there protruded a small, scared face, with very bright brown eyes, and two little speckled dimpled fists. (HTI)

Inversion between an argument and a locative phrase often takes place if the argument is modified by an infinitival or relative clause. In all the examples, in opposition, each argument undergoes no modification by either of them, whereby the application of inversion can be ascribed to factors other than modification. Hence, we must analyze “There + V + \_\_\_\_ + location” apart from “There + V + location + \_\_\_\_” and notice that the latter structure does not build a space  $M'$  introduced by the former because of

<sup>14</sup> Inversion appears to be appropriate in (31c) above, even in the case of “definite” noun phrases within *there*-constructions. However, note that the noun phrase is inverted because of the modification by the appositive clause. The *there*-construction sentence in (31c) should, thus, be set apart from the type in (33).

Furthermore, there are some instances that do not fit our expectation:

- [illegible]

## 4.8 Summary

It has been certainly contentious why locative phrases precede indefinite noun phrases in the case of (un)ergative verbs. One can safely state that we must analyze "There + V + \_\_\_\_ + location" separately from "There + V + location + \_\_\_\_." This is because the latter structure does not build a space  $M'$  introduced by the former because they are totally different in terms of their form and the latter has indefinite noun phrases within it. The instances involving inverted locative phrases seem to be too intricate to deal with here and beyond our concern, which I would like to leave unsolved in the present study.

## 5 THERE-CONSTRUCTIONS WITHOUT LOCATIVE PHRASES

(35) First *there were the stories that Kylie was in fact a complete fabrication.*  
(BNC)

We have argued that the form “There + \_\_\_\_\_ + locative” is a space-builder that

introduces a new space for uniqueness interpretation. This leads to the question whether or not uniqueness can be maintained even without any locative phrases.

### 5.1 Are There Any Assumptions for Existence?

Before adverting to uniqueness interpretation without any locative phrases, we shall now inquire into locative phrases, which are expected to confine their existence.

It is not doubtful at all that the fact that something does exist in some way presupposes some location or space in which it exists. That is, existence should entail location regardless of whether location is a physical place (e.g., street, home, hand, etc.) or a conceptual abstract (e.g., mind, distance, time, etc.). Hornstein et al. (1996) make an attempt to provide syntactic observations of *there*-constructions and describe the difference between the existential sentences reflecting part/whole or integral relations and those reflecting locational relations:

- (36) There is a Ford engine in the Saab.  
 a. Locational: (Located) in the Saab is a Ford engine.  
 b. Integral: The Saab has a Ford engine.

(Hornstein et al. 1996: 169)

Hornstein et al. mainly aim at the clarification of each relation holding different syntactic structures, and it is proved that existential sentences in English should call for locative phrases in them. As (36) illustrates, in both cases, the locative phrases are required to fill the Spec, IP position when paraphrased as in (36a) and (36b). In sum, locative phrases stem from the requirement on existence in itself.

However, Abbott (1993) suggests that *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases have some attributes in common: they are not required to generate locative phrases, and if any, these are not locative phrases that bring about existence but those modify the preceding definite noun phrase:

- (37) a. There is a book on the table. (Abbott 1993: 44)  
 b. There is the book on the table. (=3a)

As noted above, Abbott considers *there*-constructions with definite noun phrases as CE, which necessitates a context in which they are pragmatically correct, compared to those with indefinite noun phrases, i.e., NE. In her explanation, *a book* in (37a) is of course indefinite, so the place where the book exists calls for its apparent description, which is why the indefinite expression is a separate constituent from the locative phrase. On the other hand, a plausible situation for the occurrence of (37b) is to ask for a reply to interrogatives like "What can I use to prop open the door?" Suppose that (37b) functions as a reminder of some kind, which reminds the hearer of the book on the table that is available for using to prop the door open. In such a context, the referent described by *the book* may be on the table or used to be on the table; in other words, it does not definitely have to stay physically on the table at the time of the

utterance. This results in the fact that *on the table* does not necessarily presuppose the existence of the book. If this is the position, there will be no locative phrases within *there*-constructions involving definite noun phrases, so that uniqueness is not to be yielded as an appropriate interpretation because "There + \_\_\_\_\_ + locative" is a space-builder that introduces a new space for uniqueness interpretation.

### 5.2 Locative Phrases in a Broader Sense

Having touched on an unavoidable hitch by Abbott, we may not resist disapproving of the idea proposed above. The most crucial postulation in this regard is based on the assumption that some object exists in a certain place in a figurative or literal manner. Look closely at the following instances, in which each locative phrase refers to an (intensely) abstract location rather than an ordinary and actual counterpart:

- (38) a. **There were five prime ministers *between September 1950 and March 1956*.** (BNC)
- b. **Where *there is a significant interval of time between a careless act and consequent damage* it can be unhelpful to isolate the ingredients of the tort into duty, breach and damage.** (BNC)
- c. **... it is said that *there have been only four substantial innovations in matters connected with the court since its foundation*.** (HTI)
- d. **He had ceased to strike and was gazing up at the ventilator when suddenly *there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened*.**<sup>15</sup> (HTI)
- e. ***There developed a scrabble amongst dealers* to avoid going to the bottom of the heap.** (BNC)
- f. **... *there flourished in the empire a governing ethos which, ..., was unmistakably the product of an earlier age*.** (HTI)

The respective locative phrases in (38) reflect a less physical sense of location: the *there*-constructions in (38a)-(38c) put *be* to use; (38d), ergative verb; (38e) and (38f), unaccusative verbs. Both (38a) and (38b) employ the locative phrases *between September 1950 and March 1956* and *between a careless act and consequent damage*, in order to intend the existence of the referents between specific times in (38a) and between some abstract things in (38b). Also in (38c) and (38d), *in matters connected with the court since its foundation* and *from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened* fulfill the role of locative phrases, as though each of them actually refers to some physical location. In (38e), the locative phrase *among dealers* obviously indicates an abstract location, which is not easy to look upon as a physical location. The locative phrase in (38f) appears to describe not the empire as

<sup>15</sup> In the occurrence of ergative verbs within *there*-constructions accompanied by definite noun phrases, inversion between an argument and a locative phrase ought not to apply, as argued above. The inversion shown in (38d) seems to be developed simply by the noun phrase being modified by the relative clause.

such but the idea of the empire, which is less objective and difficult to identify as an actual location. After all, we are in a position to claim that locative phrases in the *there*-constructions above stem from the manifestation of something abstract in the concept of location, which should be an assumption for existence. It is borne out here that existential sentences have to place locative phrases in a specific slot.

### 5.3 Locative Phrases Linguistically Unspecified

While it may be controversial to call what we have regarded as a conceptual abstract “locative,” if locative phrases are all but compulsory and not linguistically apparent, it is not too far from the truth to supplement some position with a locative phrase, which is the assumption for existence:

- (39) a. Gilchrist pointed to Bannister. **“There is the man who set me in the right path,”** said he. (HTI)
- b. Lucy stood by the central table, heedless of Punch and the Graphic, trying to answer, or at all events to formulate the questions rioting in her brain. The well-known world had broken up, and **there emerged Florence, a magic city where people thought and did the most extraordinary things.** (HTI)

As every instance (the verb in the *there*-construction in (39a) is *be*; (39b), unaccusative) illustrates, no locative phrase is specified linguistically in *there*-constructions. Considering a context in which someone points to another person, the *there*-construction in (39a) may be employed deictically, which enables us to infer with ease the missing locative phrase because it relates to the setting in which the sentence is uttered. The situation in (39b), in which Lucy is lost deep in thought, would allow the lost locative phrase to be filled. It is obvious that Lucy has come up with the idea of Florence, and the phrase *rioting in her brain* makes sure that an abstract locative phrase like *in her mind* or *in her thought* should be adopted as a locative phrase in the *there*-construction.

Along with the generalization above, we are now ready to consider Abbott’s (1993) case in (37b). According to her suggestion, the noun phrase in *There is the book on the table* should not be separate from the prepositional phrase, explicitly, *the book on the table* makes up one single constituent. We are frequently reminded here that the sentence is supposed to be an answer to interrogatives like “What can I use to prop open the door?” It has been previously proposed that what is referred to fulfills the conditions for the uniqueness interpretation of the definite noun phrase in (37b), which we claim can also act as the assumption for existence. Suppose the missing locative phrase is to be provided in the *there*-construction in (37b), we find it natural, to some extent, to exploit *to prop open the door*, *as a support of the door*, and some other expressions equivalent to the specified locations.

#### 5.4 Summary

This section has focused on whether *there*-constructions with no locative phrases are taken differently from those with plain locative phrases. The significance of this argument originates from the concern over whether definite noun phrases without locative phrases may be construed in the same manner as locative phrases. Besides, locative phrases reflect their importance on the proposition we have claimed: the form “There + \_\_\_\_\_ + locative” should be a space-builder that introduces a new space *M'* for uniqueness interpretation. This has led us to move one sweeping statement: existence presupposes location in some way.

For the proof of the above generalization, we first reviewed some cases in which a locative phrase refers to an abstract location, rather than an actual location. This fact allows us to conclude that *there*-constructions accompanied by no locative phrases leave unspecified the slot in which a locative phrase should be originally located, which has given evidence that location is an assumption for existence. In addition, it has been testified that the assumptions underlying uniqueness interpretation (e.g., a question for identification of something) should also be the assumption for existence. As the instance adapted from Abbott (1993) demonstrates, the implication of a question can be an assumption, qualifying as a potential locative phrase.

### 6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have hitherto discussed the possibility of definite noun phrases arising within English *there*-constructions. Based on mental space theory advocated by Fauconnier (1994), we have claimed that definite noun phrases in *there*-constructions should be provided with a specific interpretation.

Firstly, we began by interpretation of definite noun phrases in *there*-constructions. With the primary account that prepositional phrases introduce a new space for a specific interpretation, in mental space theory terms, “There + \_\_\_\_\_ + locative” builds a space *M'* for uniqueness interpretation, which greatly relies on a space *M* for participants' shared comprehension. A space *M'* is not to be constructed in the case of *there*-constructions with indefinite noun phrases on account of non-definiteness. Specifically, since a space *M* lies on a participant's common knowledge, indefinite noun phrases cannot set an element in it, which blocks building a new space *M'*.

Subsequently, we explored the verb types that can be generated in English *there*-constructions. Conventionally, unaccusative verbs are supposed to turn up in *there*-constructions while ergative counterparts are not. Actual linguistic data, however, reveal that some ergative verbs signifying “appearance” or “existence” are allowed to occur. We have assumed that it is a uniqueness interpretation of definite noun phrases that causes the occurrence of verbs with “appearance” or “existence,” because uniqueness is likely to relate strongly to “appearance” or “existence.” As mentioned above, uniqueness should be motivated by a space *M'* that is newly introduced, and then ergatives with “appearance” or “existence” verbs are to occur.



Moreover, we have acknowledged the syntactic discrepancy between "There + V + location" and "There + V + location + \_\_\_\_." An indefinite noun phrase appears to follow a locative phrase in ergative *there*-constructions. The two forms should be mutually excluded because of the wholly different representations. However, we have to recognize that the fuller study of it lies outside the scope of the present paper.

Furthermore, we looked through *there*-constructions without any locative phrases. While in some contexts locative phrases refer to certain physical locations, in others they are entitled to refer to less physical locations, such as time and mind. It follows from this that existence presupposes location. Taking it into consideration, any existential sentence must bear a locative phrase, and if there are not any locative phrases disposed, then they must be just linguistically unspecified and can be supplemented in some manner. This can obviously suffice for Abbott's (1993) presumption, which is likely to be understood just as devaluing locative phrases within *there*-constructions.

This paper has discussed English *there*-constructions that seem to function as "presentation." As is often stated, however, English existentials for "deictic" use, which are not discussed in this study, behave differently in syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives. I would like to leave this for future research.

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## CORPORA

British National Corpus (<http://thetis.bl.uk>) [BNC]

HTI Modern English Collection (<http://www.hti.umich.edu>) [HTI]

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